

Amendments to the Claims:

Please amend the claims as set forth below:

Listing of Claims:

1. (Cancelled)

2. (Cancelled)

3. (Cancelled)

4. (Cancelled)

5. (Cancelled)

6. (Cancelled)

7. (Cancelled)

8. (Cancelled)

9. (Currently Amended) A support belt for reducing back injury comprising:
a support belt body sized to fit about the lower trunk of a human user, said support belt body having a front designed to be worn along the front of the lower trunk of the human user, a back designed to be worn along the back of the lower trunk of the human user, and sides designed to be worn along the sides of the human user, said support belt body being composed of elastic material;

first and second sets of protrusions disposed along the sides of the support belt body so as to press against the sides of the lower trunk of the human user during use, at positions substantially 90° and 270° from the human user's navel;

wherein the protrusions in a set are disposed between approximately four millimeters and approximately seventy millimeters, measured center to center, from each other, have a height of

from approximately one-eighth inch (3.175 millimeters) to approximately one inch (25.4 mm), and have a hemispherical shape:

said protrusions of each set being of a size to apply pressure at multiple recognizably separate points along each side of the lower trunk of the human user, whereby the pressure applied by the protrusions continually stimulates the user's muscles and thereby reduces any tendency of the muscles of the back of the human user to overcompensate in response to sudden or unexpected loading events.

10. (Cancelled)

11. (Cancelled)

12. (Cancelled)

13. (Cancelled)

14. (Cancelled)

15. (Cancelled)

16. (Cancelled)

17. (Cancelled)

18. (Cancelled)

19. (Cancelled)

20. (Cancelled)

21. (Cancelled)

22. (Cancelled)

23. (Cancelled)

24. (Cancelled)

25. (Cancelled)

26. (Cancelled)

27. (Cancelled)

28. (Cancelled)

29. (Cancelled)

30. (Cancelled)

31. (Cancelled)

32. (Cancelled)

33. (Cancelled)

34. (Cancelled)

35. (Cancelled)

36. (Cancelled)

37. (Cancelled)

38. (Cancelled)

39. (Cancelled)

40. (Previously Presented) An item of support apparel for reducing the risk of injury to a human user comprising:

a support body for substantially encircling at least a part of a human body, said human body having a lower trunk ;

at least one side panel disposed at a predetermined position along the support body, said support body and side panel being composed of elastic material;

a plurality of protrusions on the at least one side panel to apply selectively increased pressure to the human body at multiple recognizably separate points along a side of the lower trunk of the human body;

wherein the item of support apparel is a support belt including placement structure for facilitating the placement of the support body at least one inch below the navel of a human wearing the support apparel.

41. (Previously Presented) The item of support apparel as set forth in claim 40 wherein the location of said at least one side panel is a function of at least one of body shape, body size, age, conditioning, and sex of the human wearer.

42. (Previously Presented) The item of support apparel as set forth in claim 40 wherein the item is a back support, and wherein no protrusions are disposed on the back support so as to contact the back of the human wearer's body when the back support is worn as intended.

43. (Previously Presented) The item of support apparel as set forth in claim 40 wherein the item is a back support, further including two side panels spaced along the support body to be disposed along the sides of a human user wearing the back support, each of the two side panels having a plurality of said protrusions disposed upon an interior surface thereof so as

to contact the sides of the human wearer during normal use of the back support.

44. (Previously Presented) The item of support apparel as set forth in claim 43 wherein said protrusions on each of the two side panels are spaced between approximately 4 millimeters and 70 millimeters, measured center to center, from each other.

45. (Original) The item of support apparel as set forth in claim 44 wherein said protrusions have a height from approximately one quarter inch (6.35 mm) to approximately one inch (25.4 mm).

46. (Original) The item of support apparel as set forth in claim 44 wherein the protrusions have a uniform cross-sectional shape.

47. (Original) The item of support apparel as set forth in claim 46 wherein the protrusions have a hemispherical shape.

48. (Original) The item of support apparel as set forth in claim 40 wherein the item of support apparel is a joint brace.

49. (Cancelled).

50. (Previously Presented) The item of support apparel as set forth in claim 40 wherein the elastic material has a warp axis and a weft axis transverse to the warp axis, the elastic material being cut so that the weft axis substantially encircles the body of the human wearer.

51. (Cancelled)

52. (Previously Presented) The item of support apparel as set forth in claim 40 wherein the placement structure is one selected from the group consisting of interior belt loops connected to the support body, adjustable shoulder straps with a release connected to the support body, and a back adjustment mechanism connected to the support body.

53. (Original) The item of support apparel as set forth in claim 40 wherein the support body at the side panel provides a foundation for the protrusions having a firmness higher than the average firmness of the support body.